

§ [9.1-186](#). Definitions.

As used in this chapter, unless the context requires a different meaning:

"Bail enforcement agent," also known as "bounty hunter," means any individual engaged in bail recovery.

"Bail recovery" means an act whereby a person arrests a bailee with the object of surrendering the bailee to the appropriate court, jail, or police department, for the purpose of discharging the bailee's surety from liability on his bond. "Bail recovery" shall include investigating, surveilling or locating a bailee in preparation for an imminent arrest, with such object and for such purpose.

"Bailee" means a person who has been released on bail, and who is or has been subject to a bond, as defined in § [19.2-119](#).

"Board" means the Criminal Justice Services Board.

"Department" means the Department of Criminal Justice Services.

§ [9.1-186.1](#). Inapplicability of article.

The provisions of this article shall not apply to licensed bail bondsmen nor to law-enforcement officers.

§ [9.1-186.2](#). Powers of Department and Board relating to bail enforcement agents.

A. The Board shall have full regulatory authority and oversight of bail enforcement agents.

B. The Board shall adopt regulations establishing compulsory minimum, entry-level and in-service training and education for bail enforcement agents. The regulations may include provisions allowing the Department to inspect the facilities and programs of persons conducting training to ensure compliance with the law and regulations. In establishing compulsory training standards for bail enforcement agents, the Board shall ensure the public safety and welfare against incompetent or unqualified persons engaging in the activities regulated by this article. The regulations may provide for exemption from training of persons having previous employment as law-enforcement officers for a local, state or the federal government. However, no such exemption shall be granted for any person whose employment as a law-enforcement officer was terminated because of his misconduct or incompetence. The regulations may include provisions for partial exemption from such training for persons having previous training that meets or exceeds the minimum training standards and has been approved by the Department.

C. The Board shall adopt regulations that are necessary to ensure respectable, responsible, safe and effective bail enforcement within the Commonwealth and shall

include but not be limited to regulations that: (i) establish qualifications of applicants for licensure and renewal under this article; (ii) examine, or cause to be examined, the qualifications of each applicant for licensure, including when necessary the preparation, administration, and grading of examinations; (iii) levy and collect nonrefundable fees for licensure and renewal that are sufficient to cover all expenses for administration and operation of a program of licensure; (iv) ensure continued competency and prevent deceptive or misleading practices by practitioners; (v) administer the regulatory system; (vi) provide for receipt of complaints concerning the conduct of any person whose activities are regulated by the Board; (vii) provide for investigations, and appropriate disciplinary action if warranted; (viii) establish professional conduct standards, firearms training and usage standards, uniform and identification standards, reporting standards, and standards for the recovery and capture of bailees; (ix) allow the Board to revoke, suspend or refuse to renew a license for just cause; and (x) establish an introductory training curriculum which includes search, seizure and arrest procedure, pursuit, arrest, detainment and transportation of a bailee, specific duties and responsibilities regarding entering an occupied structure, the laws and rules relating to the bail bond business, the rights of the accused, ethics and Virginia law and regulation. The Board shall adopt annual compulsory, minimum, firearms training standards for bail enforcement agents. In adopting its regulations, the Board shall seek the advice of the Private Security Services Advisory Board established pursuant to § [9.1-143](#).

§ [9.1-186.3](#). Powers of Department relating to bail enforcement agents.

A. In addition to the powers otherwise conferred upon it by law, the Department may charge each applicant for licensure or licensee a nonrefundable fee as established by the Board to (i) cover the costs of processing an application for licensure, enforcement of the regulations, and other costs associated with the maintenance of the program of regulation; (ii) cover the costs of bail recovery training, processing school certifications and enforcement of training standards; (iii) conduct investigations to determine the suitability of applicants for licensure and (iv) conduct investigations to determine if any disciplinary actions against a licensed bail enforcement agent are warranted. For purposes of determining eligibility for licensure, the Department shall require the applicant to provide personal descriptive information to be forwarded, along with the applicant's fingerprints, to the Central Criminal Records Exchange for the purpose of conducting a Virginia criminal history records search. The Central Criminal Records Exchange shall forward the fingerprints and personal description to the Federal Bureau of Investigation for the purpose of obtaining a national criminal record check.

B. The Director or his designee may make an ex parte application to the circuit court for the city or county wherein evidence sought is kept or wherein a licensee does business for the issuance of a subpoena duces tecum in furtherance of the investigation of a sworn complaint within the jurisdiction of the Department or the Board to request production of any relevant records, documents and physical or other evidence of any person, partnership, association or corporation licensed or regulated by the Department pursuant to this article. The court may issue and compel compliance with such a subpoena upon a showing of reasonable cause. Upon determining that reasonable cause exists to believe

that evidence may be destroyed or altered, the court may issue a subpoena duces tecum requiring the immediate production of evidence. Costs of the investigation and adjudication of violations of this article or Board regulations may be recovered. All costs recovered shall be deposited into the state treasury to the credit of the Bail Enforcement Agent Regulatory Fund. Such proceedings shall be brought in the name of the Commonwealth by the Department in the circuit court of the city or county in which the unlawful act occurred or in which the defendant resides. The Director, or agents appointed by him, shall have the authority to administer oaths or affirmations for the purpose of receiving complaints and conducting investigations of violations of this article, or any regulation promulgated hereunder and to serve process issued by the Department or the Board.

§ [9.1-186.4](#). Limitations on licensure.

A. In order to be licensed as a bail enforcement agent a person shall (i) be 21 years of age or older, (ii) have received a high school diploma or GED, and (iii) have satisfactorily completed a basic certification course in training for bail enforcement agents offered by the Department. Partial exemptions to the training requirements may be approved by the Department if the individual has received prior training.

B. The following persons are not eligible for licensure as a bail enforcement agent and may not be employed nor serve as agents for a bail enforcement agent:

1. Persons who have been convicted of a felony within the Commonwealth, any other state, or the United States, who have not been pardoned, or whose civil rights have not been restored.
2. Persons who have been convicted of any misdemeanor within the Commonwealth, any other state, or the United States within the preceding five years. This prohibition may be waived by the Department, for good cause shown, so long as the conviction was not for one of the following or a substantially similar misdemeanor: carrying a concealed weapon, assault and battery, sexual battery, a drug offense, driving under the influence, discharging a firearm, a sex offense, or larceny.
3. Persons who have been convicted of any misdemeanor within the Commonwealth, any other state, or the United States, that is substantially similar to the following: brandishing a firearm or stalking. The Department may not waive the prohibitions under this subdivision 3.
4. Persons currently the subject of a protective order within the Commonwealth or another state.
5. Employees of a local or regional jail.
6. Employees of a sheriff's office, or a state or local police department.

7. Commonwealth's Attorneys, and any employees of their offices.
8. Employees of the Department of Corrections, Department of Criminal Justice Services, or a local pretrial or community-based probation services agency.

C. The exclusions in subsection B shall not be construed to prohibit law enforcement from accompanying a bail enforcement agent when he engages in bail recovery.

§ [9.1-186.5](#). Bail enforcement agent license; criminal history records check.

A. An applicant for a bail enforcement license shall apply for such license in a form and manner prescribed by the Board, and containing any information the Board requires.

B. Prior to the issuance of any bail enforcement agent license, each applicant shall:

1. File with the Department an application for such license on the form and in the manner prescribed by the Board.
2. Complete the basic certification courses in training for bail enforcement agents required by the Department. Any applicant who improperly uses notes or other reference materials, or otherwise cheats in any course, shall be ineligible to become a licensed bail enforcement agent.
3. Submit the appropriate nonrefundable application processing fee to the Department.
4. Submit to fingerprinting by a local or state law-enforcement agency and provide personal descriptive information to be forwarded, along with the applicant's fingerprints, to the Department of State Police Central Criminal Records Exchange. The Central Criminal Records Exchange shall forward the applicant's fingerprints and personal descriptive information to the Federal Bureau of Investigation for the purpose of obtaining national criminal history record information regarding such applicant. The applicant shall pay for the cost of such fingerprinting and criminal records check. The Department of State Police shall forward it to the Director of the Department, or his designee, who shall be a governmental entity, who shall review the record, and if the report indicates a prior conviction listed in subsection B of § [9.1-186.4](#), the individual shall be prohibited from pursuing the application process for issuance of a bail enforcement agent license unless the individual submits proof that his civil rights have been restored by the Governor or other appropriate authority.

§ [9.1-186.6](#). Licenses; renewal.

A. A license granted to a bail enforcement agent by the Department shall authorize such person to engage in the business of bail recovery.

B. Every bail enforcement agent license issued pursuant to this article shall be for a term of two years.

C. A bail enforcement agent license may be renewed for an ensuing two-year period, upon the filing of an application in the form prescribed by the Department and payment of the nonrefundable renewal application processing fee prescribed by the Department. In addition, applicants for renewal of a bail enforcement agent's license shall provide all other documentation as the Department deems appropriate, including but not limited to, a criminal history background check.

D. On or before the first day of the month prior to the month his license is due to expire, the licensee shall make application for license renewal and shall at that time pay the renewal application fee.

E. Any license not renewed by its expiration date shall terminate on such date.

F. Prior to license renewal, bail enforcement agents shall be required to complete eight hours of continuing education approved by the Department.

§ [9.1-186.7](#). Licensure of nonresidents.

A. All nonresident transfers and applicants for a bail enforcement agent license shall satisfy all licensing requirements for residents of the Commonwealth.

B. For the purposes of this article, any individual whose physical place of residence and physical place of business are in a county or city located partly within the Commonwealth and partly within another state may be considered as meeting the requirements as a resident of the Commonwealth, provided the other state has established by law or regulation similar requirements as to residence of such individuals.

§ [9.1-186.8](#). Professional conduct standards; grounds for disciplinary actions.

A. Any violations of the restrictions or standards under subsection B shall be grounds for placing on probation, refusal to issue or renew, sanctioning, suspension or revocation of the bail enforcement agent's license. A licensed bail enforcement agent is responsible for ensuring that his employees, partners and individuals contracted to perform services for or on his behalf comply with all of these provisions, and do not violate any of the restrictions that apply to bail enforcement agents. Violations by a bail enforcement agent's employee, partner or agent may be grounds for disciplinary action against the bail enforcement agent, including probation, suspension, or revocation of license.

B. A licensed bail enforcement agent shall not:

1. Engage in any fraud or willful misrepresentation, or provide materially incorrect, misleading, incomplete or untrue information in applying for an original license, or renewal of an existing license, or in submitting any documents to the Department.

2. Use any letterhead, advertising, or other printed matter in any manner representing that he is an agent, employee, or instrumentality of the federal government, a state, or any political subdivision of a state.
3. Impersonate, permit or aid and abet any employee to impersonate, a law-enforcement officer or employee of the United States, any state, or a political subdivision of a state.
4. Use a name different from that under which he is currently licensed for any advertising, solicitation, or contract to secure business unless the name is an authorized fictitious name.
5. Coerce, suggest, aid and abet, offer promise of favor, or threaten any person to induce that person to commit any crime.
6. Give or receive, directly or indirectly, any gift of any kind to any nonelected public official or any employee of a governmental agency involved with the administration of justice, including but not limited to law-enforcement personnel, magistrates, judges, jail employees, and attorneys. De minimis gifts, not to exceed \$50 per year per recipient, are acceptable, provided the purpose of the gift is not to directly solicit business, or would otherwise be a violation of Department regulations or the laws of the Commonwealth.
7. Knowingly violate, advise, encourage, or assist in the violation of any statute, court order, or injunction in the course of conducting activities regulated under this chapter.
8. Solicit business for an attorney in return for compensation.
9. Willfully neglect to render to a client services or a report as agreed between the parties and for which compensation has been paid or tendered in accordance with the agreement of the parties, but if the bail enforcement agent chooses to withdraw from the case and returns the funds for work not yet done, no violation of this section exists.
10. Fail to comply with any of the statutory or regulatory requirements governing licensed bail enforcement agents.
11. Fail or refuse to cooperate with any investigation by the Department.
12. Fail to comply with any subpoena issued by the Department.
13. Employ or contract with any unlicensed or improperly licensed person or agency to conduct activities regulated under this article, if the licensure status was known or could have been ascertained by reasonable inquiry.
14. Solicit or receive a bribe or other consideration in exchange for failing to recover or detain a bailee.

C. The Department shall have the authority to place on probation, suspend or revoke a bail enforcement agent's license if an agent is arrested or issued a summons for a criminal offense, or becomes the subject of a protective order.

§ [9.1-186.9](#). Firearms, training and usage; standards and requirements.

A. If a bail enforcement agent chooses to carry a firearm, either concealed or visible, in the course of his duties, he shall be required to:

1. First complete basic firearms training, as defined by the Board; and
2. Receive ongoing in-service firearms training, as defined by the Board.

B. In the event a bail enforcement agent discharges a firearm during the course of his duties, he shall report it to the Department within 24 business hours.

§ [9.1-186.10](#). Uniforms and identification; standards and restrictions.

A. A bail enforcement agent shall not wear, carry, or display any uniform, badge, shield, or other insignia or emblem that implies he is an agent of state, local, or federal government.

B. A bail enforcement agent shall wear or display only identification issued by, or whose design has been approved by, the Department.

§ [9.1-186.11](#). Reporting standards and requirements.

A. Each licensed bail enforcement agent shall report within 30 calendar days to the Department any change in his residence, name, or business name or business address, and ensure that the Department has the names and fictitious names of all companies under which he carries out his bail recovery business.

B. Each licensed bail enforcement agent arrested or issued a summons for any crime shall report such fact within 30 calendar days to the Department, and shall report to the Department within 30 days the facts and circumstances regarding the final disposition of his case.

C. Each licensed bail enforcement agent shall report to the Department within 30 calendar days of the final disposition any administrative action taken against him by another governmental agency in this Commonwealth or in another jurisdiction. Such report shall include a copy of the order, consent to order or other relevant legal documents.

§ [9.1-186.12](#). Recovery of bailees; methods of capture; standards and requirements; limitations.

A. During the recovery of a bailee, a bail enforcement agent shall have a copy of the relevant recognizance for the bailee. He shall also have written authorization from the bailee's bondsman, obtained prior to effecting the capture. The Department shall develop the written authorization form to be used in such circumstances.

B. A bail enforcement agent shall not enter the residence of another without first verbally notifying the occupants who are present at the time of entry.

C. Absent exigent circumstances, a bail enforcement agent shall give prior notification of at least 24 hours to local law enforcement or state police of the intent to apprehend a bailee. In all cases, a bail enforcement agent shall inform local law enforcement within 60 minutes of capturing a bailee.

D. A bail enforcement agent shall not break any laws of the Commonwealth in the act of apprehending a bailee.

§ [9.1-186.13](#). Penalties, criminal and monetary.

Any person who engages in bail recovery in the Commonwealth without a valid license issued by the Department is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor. A third conviction under this section is a Class 6 felony.

Any person who violates any statute or Board regulation who is not criminally prosecuted shall be subject to the monetary penalty provided in this section. If the Board determines that a respondent is guilty of the violation complained of, the Board shall determine the amount of the monetary penalty for the violation, which shall not exceed \$2,500 for each violation. The penalty may be sued for and recovered in the name of the Commonwealth.